

N. Hanover Street

RESULT

OF THE

OPERATION,

PUBLICLY PERFORMED,

IN ORDER TO REFUTE OR TO CONFIRM THE PRINCIPLE OF SURGICAL OPERATION PROPOSED
BY MR. WALKER.

EDINBURGH:

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1808.



TO
THOSE SCIENTIFIC AND INDEPENDENT
MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE
OF SURGEONS OF EDINBURGH
WHO DESIRE RATHER TO SEE THE
PROGRESS OF SCIENCE AND
THE TRIUMPHS OF TRUTH
THAN THE
MACHINATIONS OF INTRIGUE AND
THE SUCCESS OF PARTY,
THE RELATION OF THIS OPERATION
IS MOST RESPECTFULLY
DEDICATED
BY THE AUTHOR.

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BY MR. WALKER.

ADVERTISEMENT.

*M*Y chief motives in publishing the result of this operation were, first, to diffuse, as widely as possible, the benefits which must arise from the principle which it confirms; and, secondly, as indispensable to this purpose, to answer some objections which, with considerable art, were privately circulated against it. These objections I shall, in this advertisement, obviate.

I. Some have objected that, in the operation which I lately performed, although the artery was perforated, there was in this nothing remarkable, because the opposite side was dissected,

and, they assert, that I was regulated by it in performing the operation. Never was there, perhaps, a better example than this of the absurdity of the conduct of those who thus object to this important principle. They first, in order to prove its inapplicability, assert that the varieties in the distribution of arteries are so great that, far from agreeing in different subjects, they do not even agree in the opposite sides of the same subject, and therefore that no such principle can exist; yet now they inconsistently object that I was regulated by the structure of the opposite side, which directly contradicts their previous assertion, as it grants that the opposite sides do correspond, and therefore that so far the principle itself must be correct.

But I scorn to avail myself of such inconsistencies; nor is it at all necessary that I should. The manner in which this experiment was performed amply refutes such assertions. . . . I had published the measurement which I used, in my Preliminary Lectures, viz. that the artery was always to be found precisely at three sevenths from the inner and four from the outer end of the clavicle, and accordingly, before passing the stilet through the artery, I publicly exhibited a measure consisting of these parts; showed that it corresponded to the length of the clavicle, and that I passed down the instrument precisely at three parts from the inner and four from the outer end of that bone. I even requested two gentlemen to approach the subject, and see that this was correctly done; in other words, that this experiment was performed upon the principle of surgical operation, viz. that of precise proportional measurements, which I have proposed, all which is amply proved by the direct testimony of seventeen gentlemen who were present, who approached the subject, and who were satisfied of the perfect success of the operation.

If still it be urged, that the opposite sides corresponded, I must answer that, that is the very datum of the principle—the opposite sides do correspond in all subjects, and the artery

is ever in the same situation, so invariably, that, if my youngest pupil do not, by means of it, cut nearer to any artery, at one incision, than any of these gentlemen who object to it can, without it, at two; or if one of these gentlemen themselves do not, by means of it, cut nearer to any artery at one incision than another of them can, without it, at two; or if, in fine, the same gentleman do not, by means of it, cut nearer to any artery, at one incision, than he himself can, without it, at two—if this be not the case, I grant that the principle shall be deemed a bad one. Surely there can be no deception in this.

But to make the proposition a specific one, I am willing to repeat the operation, even in Dr. Thomson's lecture-room, on any day and at any hour he may appoint, and on a subject in every way entire and obtained by himself, and, if I do not, simply by these precise measurements, perforate, at one incision, a deep-seated artery, while he, without them, is half an inch distant from it, I shall abandon the principle, and either I shall then be refuted, or he shall regret the assertion, which he publicly and unauthorisedly ventured to make, that the principle had been tried and had failed. Surely nothing can be fairer than this; and no man of honour, who presumes to make any assertion upon the subject, will refuse to abide by it.

II. Others have objected, that I felt the injected artery through the integuments, and the objection is perfectly consistent with the great anatomical skill of those who make it. I have a very short answer to it. . . . In the above mentioned public trial, I am willing that Dr Thomson should have the advantage of feeling the subclavian artery through the integuments above the clavicle! and that I should be deprived of that advantage, it being fortunately one of which I shall not feel the loss, as I should no more have dreamed of availing myself of that than of feeling the pulmonary artery through the sides of the thorax. I rejoice, however, that such a disco-

very as this has been made, because, in future, surgeons totally ignorant of anatomy, will surely be able to feel, through the integuments of the thigh, the femoral artery, which is more superficial than that last mentioned, and we shall not again see a complete hour's dissection of all the parts contiguous to that artery on the living body before it can be reached, or innumerable occurrences of a similar nature.

This improvement, however, I am willing Dr T. should avail himself of on the above proposed public trial, which I here again offer. Surely nothing can be fairer than this; and, I must again repeat it, no man of honour, who presumes to make any assertion upon the subject, can refuse to abide by it.

ALEXANDER WALKER.

OPERATION, &c.

MR WALKER commenced by observing that, in the Prospectus of his Lectures, he had offered, as a confirmation of the principle of surgical operation which he had proposed, to pass the finest instrument from the surface of the body through any of the great vessels liable to be the subject of surgical operation, and that, consistently with this offer, he should take the present opportunity of doing so; he proposed, therefore, immediately to pass a fine instrument through one of the arteries which are most difficult to be reached; viz. the subclavian artery immediately above the clavicle; and he inculcated the importance of the operation, as one which must either, on the one hand, establish the principle on the firmest basis, viz. that of experiment and induction, and confute the lecturer who had solemnly assured his pupils that the experiment had been tried and had failed, as well as determine the motives from which he made that assertion; or, on the other hand, refute the principle and confirm that gentleman's assertion as an absolute truth. He also pointed out how much to him depended upon the success or the failure of an experiment which it was obvious he would not thus publicly have instituted if he had not been convinced of its accuracy and value.

Mr Walker then referred to his published Preliminary Lectures for that which, according to his principle, he had stated to be uniformly the situation of the artery, viz. three-sevenths from the inner, and four from the outer end

of the clavicle ; exhibited, to the gentlemen present, a scale consisting precisely of seven parts ; shewed that this scale exactly corresponded to the length of the clavicle ; and then marked correctly the third part from the inner and the fourth from the outer end of that bone. And, to render this part at least of the operation decidedly satisfactory, he requested two of the gentlemen who were present, viz. Mr Freer and Mr Anderson, the former of whom he had not previously had the pleasure of even seeing, and neither of whom he supposed could have any other interest in the operation than that of determining an important proposition, to approach the subject, and examine the scale, the clavicle, and the measurement.

On these gentlemen declaring that they were satisfied that the scale and the length of the clavicle corresponded in their parts, and that the third part from the inner and fourth from the outer end of that bone, was precisely that which was marked for the introduction of the stilet, or, in other words, that the measurement was correctly made upon the principle of operation proposed, and which, consequently, could have no other connexion with the opposite side that the two must infallibly correspond,—having received this declaration, he then held a fine stilet at the point marked, and at right angles to the clavicle, and, confident of success, entrusted, on the one part, the establishment of the principle, and the confutation of him who had publicly and solemnly asserted that the principle had failed, and whose motives must also be evidenced by the result, and, on the other part, the destruction of his own reputation as a lecturer, and the confirmation of that gentleman's assertion as a truth—all this he entrusted to one stroke of the stilet. . . . The instrument was instantly passed in at the point previously marked, and one of the gentlemen was requested to cut

down to the artery, and examine and declare what was the situation of the stilet.

This was immediately done, and the gentleman did declare that it had passed through the artery.

Mr W. now requested each of the gentlemen present actually to examine the subject. Out of twenty-one who were present, seventeen accordingly did so, and each declared himself satisfied that the coat of the artery was perforated.

In justice to himself and to the interests of science, Mr W. then requested these gentlemen to sign a declaration testifying that the experiment was correctly performed, that is, *upon the principle of surgical operation proposed*, and also that it was attended with success. This was accordingly done in the following form :

“ We who subscribe this paper hereby testify that, on Thursday the 10th of November, 1803, in the Lecture-Room, No. 63, South Bridge Street, we saw Mr Walker, BY MEANS OF THE PRINCIPLE OF SURGICAL OPERATION WHICH HE HAS PROPOSED, pass, from the surface of the body, a fine stilet through the subclavian artery immediately above the clavicle.—The coats of the artery were perforated.

JOHN FREER,
MATTHEW ANDERSON,
ROBERT PATTISON,
P. CUNNINGHAM,
WILLIAM BOWIE,
JOHN FORBES,
JAMES SCOTT,
JAMES MACEWAN,
GEORGE MICHLIE,

EDWARD SIBBIT,
JOHN W. HALLION,
JAMES JAMESON,
JAMES LOWRY,
JAMES BRUNTON,
JOHN LIZARS,
THOMAS BRYCE,
JOHN ROBERTON.”

'Thus, out of twenty-one gentlemen present, seventeen examined the subject, and testified that the operation was performed on the principle proposed; in other words, that the stilet was passed in at three-sevenths from the inner and four from the outer end of the clavicle, and that, from the surface of the body, it perforated the artery.

But, as there were four gentlemen present who did not examine the subject or sign the paper, and, as it appeared probable that some of these might be employed rather to report the failure than the success of the operation, Mr W. requested that, if any gentleman felt any thing unexplained about the operation, or had any objection to urge, he would have the goodness to state it and he should have the pleasure of answering it, and observed that every gentleman must be sensible that an objection at any other period would be at once unhandsome and unjust. No objection therefore being stated, nor even any difficulty adduced, Mr Walker thanked those gentlemen who had thus had the pleasure of confirming a most important principle of the Medical Art, and had witnessed the triumph of precise experiment and correct induction over ignorance, malice and confusion.

If, however, all this be in any way unsatisfactory, let the gentlemen above alluded to perform the operation privately, and then, it is probable, the next contest between them and Mr W. will only be whether it was not actually *they* who discovered the principle, or let them, as scientific men would not refuse to do, operate publicly with him, as in the Advertisement already offered, and so at once satisfy themselves and their friends.

By these open and fair methods it is that I shall ever attempt the establishment of principles that appear to me to be valuable, and thus it is that I have established the present.

With regard to the originality of the discovery, I have already stated the proofs of it in my published Preliminary Lectures, and have defied those who ascribed it to another to produce, even since I first enunciated the principle, any thing that approached even to a repetition of it either by M. Richerand (who, they asserted, had delivered it in a Preface!!!) or any other person. And this also these gentlemen, after all their public assertions, have been unable to do. They have therefore shown that these assertions were merely contrived in order to shelter themselves after a weak and unjust attack upon a principle of mine, in the middle of which I did not fail, like the projector of the *new* operation of lithotomy, and have themselves afforded one decisive proof of the originality of this now confirmed principle of surgical operation.

Thus I terminate a contest into which I have been most reluctantly forced, and thus I shall always treat unjust aggression.

A. W.

No. 2, North College Street,
15th November 1808.

At Mr Walker's Lectures, strangers continue to attend during the present week, after which they cannot be admitted. But as Mr W's Lectures commenced rather early, those gentlemen who have been too late for their commencement, and who enter during the present week, will have the preceding lectures privately given them. After the present week that, however, will not be possible.

